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As the Editor Sees It—**Christ and the Truth at CIA**

It's time to blow the whistle on CIA's misuse for 22 years of some words from the New Testament. True, CIA has been a subjectively innocent culprit in the matter, but culprit it nevertheless has been and continues to be.

It's whistle-blowing time because that misuse has recently been more and more repeated by others. Thus repetition only compounds the original misdeed which otherwise might have been forgiven and forgotten.

At issue are those well-known words from the Gospel of St. John: "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (At this juncture the startled reader, having no problem with that statement, may well cry out "What's the beef?" Well, read on.)

Those words—a beguiling conjunction of prized American values of knowledge, truth, and freedom—are etched in Georgia marble in the south wall of the beautiful central lobby of CIA's headquarters in Langley, Va. They have been there since the building was opened in November 1963. They are so visible, so prominent, that they irresistibly strike the eyes of all who enter—whether for the first or the umpteenth thousandth time. Their presence in an intelligence and covert action setting makes them additionally noticeable, especially by newsmen, cynics, and agency critics.

No wonder, then, that they pop up in print regularly and, apparently, increasingly. Take some recent examples:

Spotting the Inscription

ACIA widow, Mrs. Bina Kiyonaga, writing in the *Washingtonian* (March 1985) tells, with some awe, of going to CIA, walking past the CIA insignia on the floor, "past the lobby inscription 'And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free,'" and taking a private elevator to the CIA director's office for a ceremony honoring her husband.

A longtime CIA official and Vietnam expert, George W. Allen, tells a New York court in January that the "integrity" of Sam Adams, a major witness

in the aborted Westmoreland suit against CBS, "was commensurate with the biblical passage engraved in the entrance to CIA headquarters: 'And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.'"

An agency critic, Leonard Bushkoff, writing in a different vein in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* (Jan. 10, 1985), cited the inscription, along with quotations from the Chinese sage Sun Tsu and George Washington, as typical of the Madison Avenue techniques, the "symbols and precepts," employed by the CIA to counter a "dirty tricks" image and give moral legitimacy to the craft of intelligence.

And again, a harsher agency critic, columnist Jack Anderson's colleague, Dale Van Atta, writing also in the *Washingtonian* (Dec. 1983), used the words of St. John to impugn the moral integrity of countless thousands of past and present CIA employees who, he charges, have no compunction about bending Scripture and morality to CIA's purposes.

Rediscovering the Original

With instances like these on the rise, it's clearly time for someone to play the role of the boy, in the story of the emperor's clothes, who blurted out the truth of the emperor's nakedness. It's time now for someone to blurt out: "But Christ didn't say that!" He did not say what CIA for years and others for generations have been ascribing to Him.

What He did say can be found in the Bible—King James or Douay, revised or unrevised, new or old translation. There—in St. John, chapter eight, verses 31-32, John says that Jesus, having converted some Jews, "said to those Jews who believed Him: If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." What a difference!

What Christ said, as opposed to what others say He said, is this: IF you believe in me, and if you continue in my word, *then* you shall be my disciples, and *then* you shall know the truth and *then* the truth shall make you free. He made a *conditional* promise, but someone elected to eliminate the "if" clause

from the conclusion and settle for that paradisiac but truncated mélange of knowledge, truth, and freedom. However, it is not St. John. It is not Christ. It is not the truth.

Sound but No Substance

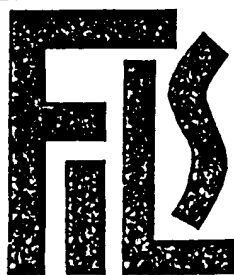
When years ago that someone first separated the "if" clause from the conclusion (life would be pleasant if all such clauses could be airily dismissed), he thereby launched those now famous words on the way to becoming a standard American cliché, an example of what some might call "secular humanism." Once launched, they were eagerly taken up by preachers, politicians, educators, and various other inspirers of good. So also were they taken up, for instance, by high school graduating classes who sat beneath their banner on the great day. So also, in due time, they were taken up by CIA, trying simply to do the American thing but surpassing all others in giving them permanent prominence and popularity.

It might be contended that the words, though admittedly a gross denial of the original, have taken on new meaning, new life, and ought, therefore, to be allowed to stand on their own. Unfortunately, they make no sense. Consider:

The inscription is not a statement of fact: it was uttered 2,000 years ago, and the great indeterminate "you" have not all known the truth and been set free by it. Nor is it a statement of future fact, a prediction—unless one wants to argue that henceforward everyone will know the truth and be set free by it! Nor is it a promise or a guarantee since no one knows to whom—where, when, and how—it applies.

Even if rewritten substantially as a new conditional promise (If you know the truth, etc.), or arbitrarily interpreted as an exhortation (Know the truth, etc.), it founders on the untenable assumption that knowledge automatically produces freedom. In short, these words, good sounding words, are precisely that: sound. They make no sense.

In this situation, the CIA, committed to truth, ought to do one of two things: quote St. John correctly or get rid of the inscription.



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